

MEMO

DATE: October 20, 2005

TO: Transportation and Communications Committee (TCC)

FROM: Naresh Amatya, Lead Regional Planner,
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RE: Status report on the Update of the RTP

In February of this year staff presented to you a schedule for updating the RTP that called for accelerating the RTP Update process. The primary reasons for the proposed acceleration in the RTP Update schedule were related to uncertainties associated with the financial plan. Most notably, revenue from Proposition 42 was being proposed to be suspended for transportation purposes, the state budget itself was in a limbo, re-authorization of TEA-21 was uncertain and Orange County was just beginning to assess their measure tax extension program. However, since then, most of these uncertainties have been resolved. The State budget is in place, Prop. 42 has been re-instated, at least for the current fiscal year, re-authorization of TEA-21 is in place and Orange County is moving forward with the measure extension.

Re-authorization of TEA-21, known as Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act- a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was signed into law by President Bush on August 10, 2005, includes a provision that would allow SCAG to update the RTP every four years rather than every three years as required by TEA-21. Under the TEA-21 rule, SCAG would have to adopt the next RTP by April of 2007. SAFETEA-LU could potentially give SCAG an additional year to adopt the next RTP, by April 2008. However, transportation conformity on the current RTP (2004 RTP) expires on June 16, 2007. The full implications of this potential conformity gap if SCAG were to pursue the RTP Update based on the provisions of SAFETEA-LU is unknown at this point. SAFETEA-LU also requires MPOs to expand the RTP scope to address or include an environmental mitigation program, transportation system security, emphasis on non-motorized transportation and other strategies that maximize utilization of available system capacity, an expanded consultation process, emphasis on system operation and maintenance, and better coordination between land use and transportation improvements. Staff is still in the process of assessing resource as well as planning and policy implications of these new requirements. Federal agencies responsible for implementing SAFETEA-LU are just beginning their rule making process to provide guidance and clarification on the new requirements. Over the past month, staff has been talking to other Metropolitan Planning Organizations, transportation agencies as well as umbrella organizations such as the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) across the nation to get a sense of how others are gearing up to comply with the new requirements of SAFETEA-LU. Over the next month staff will consult with the federal representatives and continue to clarify the new regulations so that staff can present a recommendation to you relative to our approach for the next RTP update by the end of this year or the early part of next year.

